Gauge conversion of Quilon-Tenkasi, etc. sections in Southern Railway

*256. SHRI K.P.K. KUMARAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the gauge conversion pertaining to the Quilon-Tenkasi, Tenkasi-Tirunelveli and Tirunelveli-Tiruchendur sections of the Southern Railway is dragging on for years;

(b) whether the work would be expedited and concluded at least by the end of next year;

(c) whether the Tirunelveli-Tiruchendur section would be given priority because of the Murgan temple at Tiruchendur which attracts pilgrims nationwide; and

(d) whether his Ministry would consider favourably to introduce a few long distance trains from Tiruchendur after gauge conversion as this would ease the congestion in the North bound passenger traffic from the Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari/Nagercoil stations?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) to (c) Gauge conversion of Quilon-Tenkasi, Tenkasi-Tirunelveli and Tirunelveli-Tiruchendur sections have been taken up as part of Quilon-Tirunelveli-Tiruchendur and Tenkasi-Virudhunagar gauge conversion project (357 Kms). On this project, gauge conversion of Tenkasi-Virudhunagar (122 Kms) has already been completed and commissioned. Gauge conversion of Quilon-Punalur (45 Kms), Tenkasi-Sengottai (8 Kms) and Tirunelveli-Tiruchendur (61 Kms) sections have been targeted for completion during 2006-07. However, progress on Quilon-Punalur is affected because of land disputes and Tirunelveli-Tiruchendur due to slow progress and failure of contractors. These sections are expected to be completed during 2007-08.

On Tenkasi-Tirunelveli (72 Kms) section, bridge works have been taken up and is planned for completion in next 2-3 years. The balance portion of this project from Punalur to Sengottai is a Ghat section where final location survey has been completed and detailed estimate is under process. No target has been fixed for completion of gauge conversion of this section.

(d) There is no proposal at present for introduction of long distance trains from Tiruchendur.